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GENERAL PLAN
CITY OF ESCALON ,
SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
CALIFORNIA
DECEMBER, 1965

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City planning

Escalon

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BACKGROUND

Escalon is a young city; young in spirit; recently founded as a community, 1894; young as a City, incorporated in 1957. In its brief history the community has overcome many obstacles; several serious fires, the change from grain farming to irrigated agriculture; the change in transportation emphasis from railroads to highways. Perhaps being young in spirit has been the key. Clearly then Escalon has been molded by three major forces; agriculture, railroads and highways.

The earliest settler of great renown was Johnny Jones who crossed the plains in 1852 and settled in what is now Escalon. As the area developed grain farming was the primary agriculture. Johnny Jones built up an "empire" of 8000 acres and in 1867 built a two story brick home which still stands in Escalon today. Freight was transported along the "Old French Camp Road" between Stockton and Sonora. Excepting for that bit of commerce, the area remained agricultural.

With the organization of the San Francisco, Stockton and San Joaquin Valley Railroad in 1893 Johnny Jones' son James started subdividing what is now Escalon. The first train passed through Escalon in 1896. By 1899 the railroad was purchased by Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company.

The agriculture has changed from grain farming to orchards, vineyards, pasture and other diverse crops with the successful application of irrigation. Active efforts towards irrigation of the surrounding lands was initiated by Wright Cowell in 1866. Years of frustration, followed until the South San Joaquin Irrigation District was formed in 1909. The first irrigation season was 1914. And so another change in Escalon environment was launched.

The first auto travel is not recorded. But the ever expanding, ever changing highway system of the area has had its influence. Escalon is located on State Highway 120 which is the major route from the San Francisco Bay Area to the Sonora Pass area of the Sierras, and the Big Oak Flat route to Yosemite National Park. Also passing through Escalon is Escalon-Bellota Road which runs from the McHenry Village area of Modesto to the Linden-Bellota area.

As all of the forces were and are exerting their influence externally on Escalon, the community was and is responding by establishing schools starting in 1903, a bank in 1912, civic clubs, fire department, sanitary district, recreation facilities and all of the other institutions of a modern community. The governmental functions were all brought together into one organization with the incorporation of the City of Escalon in 1957.

Economically the mainstay of the community is agribusiness. The community provides services and goods for the surrounding agricultural area. The community contains one cannery and two wineries. The single largest industry is the steel fabricating firm of California Blow Pipe and Steel Company. The community has a complete retail district including several automobile agencies.

In addition provides residential areas for people working in Modesto and Stockton who like living in a small, friendly community.

The development of this General Plan is dedicated to expanding the educational, cultural, recreational, and economic opportunities of the City through a planned and orderly development of the community.

ESCALON GENERAL PLAN - STUDY DATA

	1966	PREDICTED
POPULATION	2,100 PERSONS	8,000 PERSONS
AREA: IN ACRES		
RESIDENTIAL	278	592
COMMERICAL	26	100
INDUSTRIAL	25	241
AGRICULTURAL	37	0
SCHOOLS	54	162
GROSS	420	1095
DENSITIES: IN PERSONS PER ACRE		
RESIDENTIAL	7.6	15.2
COMMERCIAL	81	80
INDUSTRIAL	84	33
SCHOOLS	39	49
GROSS	5.0	7.3



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GOALS

I. To provide a plan, broad in nature, to serve as a guide for land use as the City develops within its present boundaries and expands into the surrounding area.

II. To provide a plan to assist in the long range planning of the services provided by the City including streets, parks, recreation, police and fire protection and sewers.

III. To provide a plan to assist the City in matters related to the City's coordinated actions with other governmental, quasi-government and private agencies.

IV. To provide a plan to encourage the logical and orderly expansion of the commercial and industrial activities of the City.

V. To provide a plan to make Escalon a more pleasant place to live.

MAJOR POLICIES

1. Escalon shall remain the same type of community during the next twenty years. The City shall remain the commercial center for the surrounding agricultural area. Agriculturally oriented industries as well as other light and medium industries shall continue to be the industrial fabric of the community. The City shall continue its residential function for the Stockton and Modesto areas.
2. The major commercial center shall remain the present commercial center and the immediately adjacent areas. Two additional neighborhood shopping centers shall be provided.
3. The City shall construct a Civic Center providing facilities for all of the present city services; administrative, police and public works. In addition the civic center shall provide a community hall with facilities for major group functions, a library and cultural center, and a park.
4. Three additional neighborhood parks shall be acquired.
5. The present State Route 120 shall bypass the City relieving congestion within the City. Additional collector streets shall be provided to relieve pressure at the intersection of St. Clair and the present Highway 120 which is the confluence of every major arterial leading into Escalon.

PRINCIPLES & STANDARDS

1. It is assumed that the present population of the City is 2100 and that the City will contain 8000 persons by 1984.
2. The average population density is taken as 14 persons per acre. This figure is developed as follows: 4 dwellings per acre with 3.5 persons per dwelling.
3. At ultimate development 3100 persons will reside within the present City Limits.
4. Multiple-family dwellings should be built adjacent to the commercial districts to act as buffer zones between the commercial and single family uses.
5. It is anticipated that new industries will provide 200 additional full time jobs. Industries locating in Escalon will use the excellent highway and rail transportation facilities.
6. This plan is compatible with the General Plan adopted by San Joaquin County in 1963.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN

RESIDENTIAL:

It is planned that the new areas annexing to the City will be developed primarily into single family dwelling units on lots of approximately 7,000 square feet in net area. The multi-family dwelling units should be built adjacent to the commercial properties forming a buffer zone of about 200 feet in depth between the commercial properties and the single family dwellings. This same type of buffer zone, 100 feet in depth, should be established along high volume traffic arterial frontage which is not developed into commercial uses. It is planned that these buffer zones will fulfill the need for multi-family dwelling units and at the same time, increase the desirability of Escalon's single family areas.

In the outer areas of the community, estate type units are planned as established "Residential Zone R-A of City Zoning Ordinance."

SCHOOLS

It is anticipated that five grade schools will be necessary. The present Dent Union School will be the central school providing shops, administrative headquarters, and garages for all of the schools. The present site of 16 acres appears to be large enough for these requirements. The rest of the school sites should be about 10 acres and located within walking distance of the children on a neighborhood basis.

The high school site with its 37 acres has been planned on a long range basis and is therefore adequate for this planning period.

With the present State legislation, it is entirely possible that the schools will undergo some organizational changes. These changes may alter the number of grade schools and possibly add a junior high school; however, the basic requirements will be the same and will not alter the remaining elements of this General Plan.

RECREATIONAL

As leisure time increases, the recreational demands will increase. A community park should be incorporated in the Civic Center. This park should provide the facilities needed which might be associated with a cultural center and are not in great demand, such as: a multi-purpose building for informal lectures, meetings, hobby workshops, outdoor pursuits, such as: archery, dry-land ski schools, and drum and bugle corps practice.

Three neighborhood parks should be established, providing play facilities for the young children, and open space. Since the high school and the grade school of Escalon embrace a policy of recreational use of the school sites during the summer months, it is planned to associate three neighborhood parks of 5 acres each with three of the new grade schools. This will afford a logical grouping of functions and reduce the duplication of facilities such as store-rooms, lockers, etc. Also, under the present organization, the schools and the City are closely associated.

COMMERCIAL

COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL

In planning a commercial area there are two conflicting ideas: "Strip Commercial Zoning" along arterial streets is undesirable for the adjacent single family dwellings and the movement of traffic; however, the investors in most commercial enterprises want to locate on arterial streets with lots of traffic. In order to satisfy both of these requirements, the present Highway 120 frontage from the Santa Fe tracks easterly to the present City Limits is planned commercial, as well as the present commercial property along Main Street. The rest of the commercial growth is planned between Main Street, Third Street and Highway 120, and southwesterly of the Santa Fe tracks bounded by the southerly City Limits and the Escalon-Bellota Road.

The retail commercial area should be developed in the area northeasterly of the Santa Fe tracks. The heavy commercial uses, such as wholesale warehouses, lumber yards and garages, i.e., similar to some of the existing uses, are planned for the area southwesterly of the Santa Fe tracks.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

It is planned that one neighborhood commercial area of 5 acres be located in the northeast section of the community and one in the southwest section. The neighborhood commercial should provide the day-to-day needs of the normal household, including groceries, beauty shops, bakeries, etc.

INDUSTRIAL

The industrial area is planned generally along the Escalon-Bellota Road south of Escalon, and that area between the Escalon-Bellota Road and the Santa Fe tracks. This area offers excellent transportation facilities. It is also situated so that the prevailing winds will not create nuisances in the commercial and residential areas.

This area also offers excellent access to the utilities, both public and private, needed by most industries.

Attracting industry to a given community is very complicated and frustrating. With the present resources of the City, the best course to follow is to create a climate favorable to the type of industry desired and within reasonable expectations. The City should then make the facts relative to this favorable climate readily available. Appropriate cooperation with the chambers of commerce is the next step.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CIRCULATION PLAN

As described in the Major Policies it is assumed that through highway traffic will be carried on a bypass of the City.

At this time, no definite route, either north or south of Escalon, has been selected for the bypass. The final decision rest with the Division of Highways of the State of California. However, the San Joaquin County Planning Commission anticipates a bypass to the south of Escalon. The circulation plan is compatable with both locations of the bypass.

MAJOR ARTERIALS

The major arterials consist of the present State Highway 120, Main Street, Escalon-Bellota Road, First Street from Highway 120 to Escalon-Bellota Road, and a southern Arterial running from Santa Fe to Escalon-Bellota Road. The major routes of travel will remain the same as the present, that is traffic to and from Escalon will continue to have the present origin-destination pattern.

Also the southern arterial will provide the Santa Fe Avenue traffic with direct access to the industrial area and connect to the Escalon-Bellota Road (Modesto Highway). This will be accomplished without routing the traffic through the downtown area.

COLLECTOR STREETS

The functions of the collector streets are to funnel the traffic to the Major Arterials and specifically in this plan to provide access in such a manner to relieve the congestion at the present Highway 120 and the Escalon-Bellota Road.

The major features include a loop around the northeast sector to Escalon from the Escalon-Bellota Road to the present Highway 120 extending southerly to Santa Fe Avenue. Also a loop through the southwest area is planned by extending Oklahoma Avenue to the south and swinging east to connect to the Escalon-Bellota Road south of the present City Limits.

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